

# NEWS

VHNT

Volume 1, Number 1

January 1998

A newsletter designed to inform, assist, and engage the public in developing the best alternative for I-73.

## VDOT Introduces I-73 Newsletter

Welcome to the first issue of *Future 73 News*, a periodic newsletter published by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT).

Nationally, Interstate 73 (I-73) has been defined by federal transportation legislation as a new high priority corridor beginning north of Detroit, Michigan and extending to Charleston, S.C. In Virginia, the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB), selected an approximately seven-mile wide corridor for I-73. The corridor in Virginia roughly follows Route 460 from West Virginia through Giles and Montgomery counties, to the Smart Road, to I-81 and I-581, then on to Route 220 south to North Carolina. This corridor was chosen for technical merit and in response to public opinion.

VDOT is now looking to choose a more specific location for I-73 between the Roanoke Valley and North Carolina. Where should I-73 go? Your input on the project will help the CTB make the best decision for Virginia. This newsletter will provide information to you throughout the I-73 Location Study and offer you many ideas on how you can get involved.

## In This Issue

Corridor Map  
Public Participation Meetings  
What is a Location Study?  
Purpose and Need  
How to Get Involved

## Where Should I-73 Go? VDOT Invites Public Opinion on Location of I-73

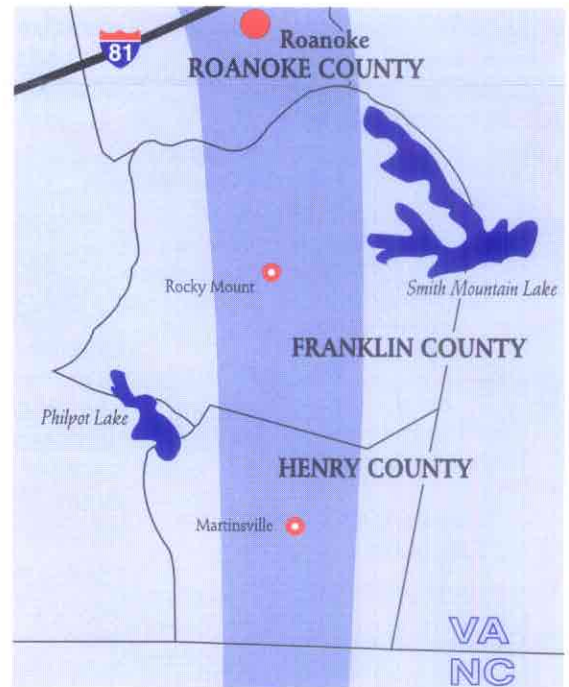
Now, before any lines are put on paper, engineers and planners with the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) need to hear from the people who live, work and use the Route 220 corridor from the Roanoke Valley to North Carolina.

"Where should I-73 be located? What should it be close to, and what should it avoid?" asked Fred Altizer, administrator of VDOT's 12-county Salem District. "We need our citizens to work with us and help us find several specific options for I-73. I invite everyone to attend our upcoming meetings and give us your best ideas."

VDOT has scheduled three Public Participation Meetings for January 20-22. Each meeting will be conducted in an informal "open house" style from 3-7 p.m. so interested citizens can stop in at their convenience.

Displayed at the meetings will be charts giving traffic and safety information about Route 220, the purpose and need for I-73, goals of the VDOT study now under

*Continued on next page*



### Public Participation Meetings

Where should I-73 go? Plan now to attend the Public Participation Meeting nearest you. Come any time at your convenience. We welcome your ideas!

**Tuesday, January 20, 1998 – Collinsville, 3-7 p.m.**

The Dutch Inn  
2360 Virginia Avenue (Route 220 N)

**Wednesday, January 21, 1998 – Rocky Mount, 3-7 p.m.**

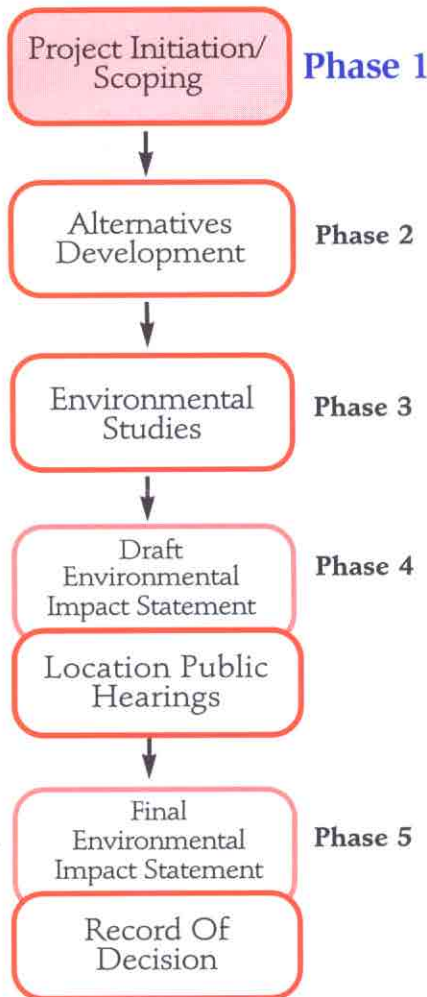
Center for Applied Technology and Continuing Education  
150 Technology Drive

**Thursday, January 22, 1998 – Roanoke, 3-7 p.m.**

Clarion Hotel (formerly Sheraton Airport Inn)  
2727 Ferndale Drive, NW



# Steps to Success: What is a Location Study?



The I-73 Location Study is now in Phase 1. The Location Study will proceed in five distinctive phases. Each phase includes opportunities for public involvement.

The road from plan to pavement seems long, but there are important and necessary steps along the way to ensure a successful project. From concept or idea, a project undergoes a Feasibility Study. If the project is doable and desirable, a Location Study is launched. Then comes the drafting of detailed plans for construction. The last step is highway construction.

The current step in developing I-73 is the Location Study. It has five phases, starting with an understanding of why a road should be built and ending with a decision on where it will be located. The Location Study is now in **Phase 1**.

## **Phase 1 – Project Initiation/ Scoping.**

To fully define what I-73 is, a statement of purpose and need is required. The I-73 Study Team has prepared this statement, and it will be available at the January Public Participation Meetings for you to review. Phase 1 is also the time to determine goals and objectives for the study, based on your input and the input of local groups and agencies. Some of those goals are to address economic priorities for the communities along Route 220 and to address safety concerns on existing Route 220.

During Phase I, public involvement is very important, and many communication methods will be used to elicit citizen input. Some of those include public meetings, a toll-free information phone number and this newsletter.

## **Phase 2 – Alternatives Development.**

Several possible road locations, or

alternatives, will be devised based on your ideas, traffic counts, aerial mapping and early environmental evaluations in the study area. Alternatives should meet the stated purpose and need for the project. Four or five alternatives will be selected for more detailed technical and environmental studies. (These alternatives will be narrower than the study corridor, but they will not be detailed plans for construction.) A “No-Build” alternative will be considered.

## **Phase 3 – Technical and Environmental Studies.**

These studies further define possible design of the road and suggest potential right-of-way requirements. Technical studies for transportation, noise, air, land use, wetlands, parklands, cultural and historic resources, and other environmental issues will be completed.

## **Phase 4 – Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Public Hearings.**

Information developed in Phases 1, 2 and 3 is gathered into a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). Once the DEIS is ready, public hearings will be held throughout the study corridor for citizens to comment on its findings.

## **Phase 5 – Final Environmental Impact Statement and the Record of Decision.**

The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) focuses on a selected corridor location and responds to your comments on the DEIS. This document is submitted to the Federal Highway Administration, which issues a Record of Decision. The Location Study is then complete.

## Public opinion continued from front page

way, aerial photography and topographical maps. Members of VDOT's I-73 Study Team will be present to talk with participants and answer questions.

Most importantly, the meetings will include opportunities for citizens to show VDOT their preferences for I-73. Participants can look over maps of the Route 220 corridor and talk about their ideas for the new road, or write down their suggestions and leave them at the meeting or mail them in later.

“Based on feedback from the public at these meetings, we will develop several alternatives for I-73,” said Altizer. “Then we’ll have another set of public meetings this spring to

show everyone what alternatives have been developed.”

Prior to the upcoming Public Participation Meetings, VDOT put together an I-73 Study Team comprised of staff engineers and engineering and planning consulting team led by Parsons Brinckerhoff Quade & Douglas, Inc. to conduct a Location Study, the next step in the highway planning process.

The study began in the summer of 1997 with the goal of defining several options for the new highway. “Public involvement is key to the success of our Location Study,” said Altizer. “We encourage your comments and suggestions.”



# Study Defines Purpose and Need for I-73

What is the purpose of I-73, and why is it needed in Virginia? Those questions represent more than a philosophical discussion.

To meet federal requirements for developing a major new highway project, its purpose and need must be clearly defined and demonstrated.

That is why, as part of the I-73 Location Study, traffic data has been collected and analyzed, accident data has been studied, and many people already have been asked to give their opinions on the benefits and/or problems a new interstate would bring to this part of Virginia.

All this background has been gathered and summarized in a document called Statement of Purpose and Need for I-73. The document will be available at the upcoming Public Participation Meetings for you to review.

*Briefly, there are two main "needs" for a new I-73 in the Route 220 corridor: safety and economic growth.*

## Safety First

Accidents on Route 220 have resulted in significant numbers of deaths and injuries. Recent accidents have increased residents' concerns that something needs to be done. The table on this page shows the results of VDOT's safety analysis of Route 220.

## ACCIDENT SUMMARY OF THE U.S. 220 CORRIDOR

January 1, 1991 to December 31, 1993

Type of Accident or Damage	Number of Occurrences
Total Accidents (both directions)	829
Fatal Accidents	18
Number of Persons Killed	22
Injury Accidents	418
Number of Persons Injured	666
Property Damage Accidents	393

Source: VDOT, 1994.

Although VDOT continues to make improvements to Route 220, several factors contribute to the accident rate:

- ◆ *high percentage of truck traffic*
- ◆ *steep road grades*
- ◆ *over-sized trucks*
- ◆ *crossovers with no turn lanes or a turn lane in only one direction*

## Economic Potential

A new interstate should be good for business and industry in the Roanoke Valley and Franklin and Henry counties. Large numbers of trucks travel on Route 220. Local manufacturers have business connections with the cities of Greensboro, Winston-Salem and High Point in North Carolina. A better road between the Roanoke Valley and the Piedmont Triad will enhance economic growth in the Franklin and Henry county areas. Improved access through the Roanoke Valley to I-581 and I-81 will link businesses in the study area with locations in the eastern U.S.

Together, the two factors of safety and economic growth make a case that a new interstate highway in Virginia should be located on or near existing Route 220.

*Once the need for a project is determined, VDOT and the Federal Highway Administration define the "purpose" of the new road.*

In 1991, the U.S. Congress designated I-73 as a new high priority corridor to be developed in the eastern United States, with about 100 miles of it in Virginia. In 1995, Congress made I-73 official by including it in the National Highway System. This is part of the purpose for I-73. Specifically, I-73's purpose is to:

- ◆ *reduce traffic conflicts between trucks and local traffic on Route 220;*
- ◆ *support the local economy in the counties, cities and towns in the study area;*
- ◆ *provide better access to tourist attractions in the study area; and*
- ◆ *provide a safer and more efficient road for residents and businesses.*

The need for I-73 in Virginia combines local safety and economic development needs with national needs to link key manufacturing and production regions of the country with U.S. markets at home and abroad.



# Getting the Word Out

We want you to know what is happening on the I-73 Location Study. We want you to know the results of the technical studies, and we want you to participate in public meetings when they are scheduled. During the three-year study, we plan to use this newsletter, brochures, public meetings, newspaper articles, interviews on local radio and TV shows, the VDOT Internet Web Site and other ways to share information with you.

Visit the Web Site at <http://www.vdot.state.va.us>



## How to Get Involved in the I-73 Location Study

To ensure that all residents, businesses, elected officials and government agencies in the corridor know about and participate in this study, the I-73 Study Team has put together a special public participation program. Using various methods of communication, the public participation program will:

- ◆ share information with you about the I-73 Location Study;
- ◆ receive your I-73 issues and address them;
- ◆ consider your ideas and concerns for project design and environmental decisions; and
- ◆ answer your questions.

## Hearing From You

Use our toll-free phone number, **1-888-I73-PLAN (1-888-473-7526)**, at any time. During regular business hours, you can talk to our operator. After business hours, your message will be recorded. Either way, we will get back to you. Leave your name and address, and we will add you to our mailing list. If you want to tell us what you think, using the toll-free number is one good way to do it. TDY phone access is available, TDY 1-(800)-307-4630.

Another way to give us your ideas on where to put I-73 is by attending our public meetings. We will hold these throughout the Study in several places along the corridor. Each meeting will be advertised in local newspapers and on the radio. Also, we'll use the **Future 73 News** to announce upcoming public meetings and other opportunities for input.

If you belong to a group or organization that would like to hear about the I-73 Location Study, call the toll-free number, and we will provide a speaker for you.

The I-73 Location Study will be a success if you get involved with the project and keep talking to us during the next three years until an alternative for the road is selected and approved.



Virginia Department of Transportation  
Salem District Office  
P.O. Box 3071  
Salem, VA 24153

